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SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 7th MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Tuesday, 23 April 1991, at 3 p.m.

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| Chairman: | Ms. PALME | (Sweden) |
| later: | Ms. SETH (Vice-Chairman) | (India) |
| later: | Ms. PALME (Chairman) | (Sweden) |

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General debate (continued)

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Any corrections to the records of the meetings of this session will be consolidated in a single corrigendum, to be issued shortly after the end of the session.

The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

GENERAL DEBATE (continued)

1. Mr. SEMUKHA (Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic) said that 11 December 1991 would mark the forty-fifth anniversary of the adoption of General Assembly resolution 57 (I) establishing the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund. The achievements of UNICEF since that time had been crowned by the 1990 World Summit for Children, which had significantly enhanced the authority of UNICEF in international affairs. At the Summit, the Heads of State of more than 70 countries, including his own, had demonstrated political support for the programme goals of UNICEF for the 1990s and had decided to implement a concrete Plan of Action to address the needs of children as a matter of priority. Another major event in 1990 had been the entry into force of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which the Byelorussian SSR had been one of the first countries to ratify.

2. The role of UNICEF was to cooperate with Governments, non-governmental organizations and other international agencies to define the needs of children and to support individual countries in planning and implementing appropriate measures to address those needs. Its activities should defend the interests of all children, in accordance with the principle of universality proclaimed in the Convention.

3. It was particularly important that the commitment to enhancing the physical and spiritual well-being of children, as set forth in the Declaration, should be viewed as the common task of all peoples. That provision of the Declaration was a message of hope and universal solidarity that took on special significance for the children and mothers who had suffered from the effects of the Chernobyl nuclear accident. The growth of international solidarity in support of those victims had culminated in the sponsorship by more than 120 Member States of General Assembly resolution 45/190 on international cooperation to address and mitigate the consequences of the accident. In addition, the interim report of the Secretary-General on the matter had indicated that the situation required concerted action by the entire international community.

4. In 1990, the Supreme Soviet of the Byelorussian SSR had declared the territory of the Republic a national ecological disaster area. The scale and consequences of the disaster were becoming clearer as the years passed. Physicians and scientists had reaffirmed the continuing danger posed by radioactive contamination. Studies had shown that half of all children from the contaminated zone who had been examined were ill, with changes in their immune system, blood or thyroid gland. Levels of radioactive caesium in children were 2 to 10 times permissible levels, and the milk of nursing mothers had been found to contain caesium. There was also an increased incidence of anaemia, leukaemia and malignant tumours. In Byelorussia alone, the health and lives of 800,000 children were at risk, and UNICEF could not

(Mr. Semukha, Byelorussian SSR)

afford to ignore them. Emergency assistance was needed in the form of medical examinations, treatment and relocation outside the contaminated zone. His delegation would present a draft resolution to that effect to the Programme Committee, and he hoped for the continued understanding, sympathy and support of the Executive Board.

5. Mr. VACEK (Czechoslovakia) said that in the past year and a half, there had been a marked increase in child-related activities in Czechoslovakia. Those activities included high-level discussions at Prague with the UNICEF Deputy Executive Director, active participation in the World Conference on Education for All and in the World Summit for Children, various workshops and conferences in Czechoslovakia and neighbouring countries and the first visit by the UNICEF Executive Director to Czechoslovakia, which had significantly improved the country's relations with UNICEF. In addition, Parliament had ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child and had approved considerable aid for children in the region of the Chernobyl accident. The transformation of the country's National Committee for UNICEF into an independent organization was nearly complete.

6. Because of the problems caused by Czechoslovakia's transition to a market economy, its Government had been unable to increase its contribution to UNICEF. Moreover, the difficulties of the transition period placed children at risk of suffering from the adverse social and psychological effects of economic hardship. The Government was therefore preparing a law on assistance to families with children and had decided to establish a social emergency network. Further action would be needed in the years to come, however, and he hoped that Czechoslovakia's National Committee for UNICEF would play a major role in protecting the rights of children.

7. In accordance with article 34 of the Plan of Action adopted at the World Summit, intensive negotiations were under way in Czechoslovakia for the establishment of a working group in charge of creating a mechanism to implement the Plan. Czechoslovakia had also acted on its obligations under the Convention on the Rights of the Child by preparing for an international conference on child abuse and neglect, to be held at Prague in June 1991. It supported the proposal that the Executive Board should, at its current session, decide to launch an appeal for speedy ratification of the Convention by those countries which had not yet done so.

8. He welcomed the establishment of two Programme Officer posts for Central and Eastern European affairs. The Officers should begin their work by familiarizing themselves at first hand with the real situation in the region and with the particular problems and needs of each individual country. UNICEF policy in the region should focus inter alia on "adjustment with a human face", children and the environment, assistance in creating community-based financing and preventive measures against the involvement of children in drug trafficking. He was also pleased to note the increased attention being given to education for development, including the creation of two Education for

(Mr. Vacek, Czechoslovakia)

Development Officer posts. He recommended that the Executive Director submit the UNICEF document on education for development policy to the Executive Board in 1992. The document on external relations (E/ICEF/1991/L.4) fully satisfied the requirements of decision 1990/14, and he believed that a separate document on external relations would no longer be necessary within a few years. He welcomed the country approach as a new trend in UNICEF activities in industrialized countries, although details were required on when and under which plan the new approach would be applied in practice.

9. Increased cooperation between UNICEF and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) had resulted in an important publication on children and the environment and in UNICEF participation in preparations for the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development. Since the role of UNICEF in solving the steadily worsening problems of the environment was extraordinarily important, he recommended the establishment of a UNICEF/UNEP Joint Committee on Environmental Policy, along the lines of the existing Joint Committees with WHO and UNESCO. With respect to budgetary and financial matters, he strongly favoured the adoption of documents E/ICEF/AB/L.1 and L.9 in their current form. However, with respect to recruitment, the Executive Director's report did not reflect the non-representation of many countries on UNICEF's staff. The UNICEF secretariat should take that reality into consideration when organizing recruitment missions.

10. Mr. VAN SCHAIK (Netherlands) said that the importance of the World Summit for Children, the World Conference on Education for All and the Convention on the Rights of the Child lay primarily in the translation of goals, objectives and commitments agreed to at the global level into action at the national and local levels. His Government was in the process of making certain adjustments to its policies and procedures in the light of the results of the World Summit. In response to the Plan of Action adopted at the Summit and the recommendations in the Executive Director's report, the Netherlands planned to continue to give high priority to the health sector and particularly to primary health care, with emphasis on the poorer population groups in both urban and rural environments and on popular participation. It also intended to increase its support for education in all forms and at all levels in developing countries. His Government had pledged to increase its level of assistance to Africa by approximately 50 per cent over the coming decade.

11. He agreed that there was a need to restructure development assistance budgets to give higher priority to the social sector and basic services. UNICEF country programmes should set a standard in that regard, since national administrations required the expertise and experience of UNICEF in assessing the impact of development activities on women and children. In the field of debt reduction, his delegation was prepared to continue and develop activities in cooperation with UNICEF, perhaps along the lines of the UNICEF/Inter-American Development Bank initiative concerning "debt for development" swaps.

(Mr. Van Schaik, Netherlands)

12. Further clarification and discussion were required concerning the proposed orientation and possible consequences of programmes for children as the conscience of a movement. The implied shift in focus from development issues to advocacy and social mobilization issues should not be allowed to undermine regular programme implementation. He also looked forward to discussions on improved coordination of responses to emergencies on the part of UNICEF, as well as on the budget and the proposal for new office accommodation.

13. He was pleased that the 1990 Summit had prompted an increase in contributions to UNICEF. His Government's core contribution to UNICEF would continue to grow steadily in the future, and public contributions to the Netherlands National Committee were likely to grow as well. In fact, those contributions had exceeded the Government's contribution to UNICEF in 1990, and the Netherlands National Committee ranked second in absolute terms as a contributor to UNICEF. He trusted that the increase in contributions would be matched by increased efforts on the part of UNICEF to pursue a sound budgetary policy.

14. Mr. YAHYA (Indonesia) said that in the late 1980s, the end of the ideological competition between East and West had engendered a new optimism about the international community's capacity to collectively and meaningfully address issues of international peace, security and socio-economic development. That attitude, together with the renewed faith in the United Nations, offered new prospects for the survival, protection and development of children. The previous year's activities to enhance public awareness of children's issues had raised hopes that child welfare and development would finally receive due attention at the highest levels of government, that such issues would be addressed within broader development strategies and that children, particularly those in the developing countries, would eventually benefit from a peace dividend.

15. It was evident, however, that the fulfilment of such hopes remained a remote possibility in many parts of the world. The goal of a more open and equitable international trading system had yet to be achieved, while the persistent debt burden and the adverse effects of a rapidly fluctuating international economy and lower commodity prices had significantly undermined the capacity of many developing countries to implement social or economic development activities. Some regions had even experienced a decline in their development capabilities.

16. Globally, however, progress had been made. Standards for the treatment of children had been firmly established by the adoption and speedy entry into force of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which all States should ratify and implement. Of the UNICEF activities detailed in the report on the implementation of the Convention (E/ICEF/1991/L.7), his delegation particularly welcomed the development of national mechanisms for gathering gender-specific data on children, which it hoped would help develop child

(Mr. Yahya, Indonesia)

welfare programme policy; the preparation of revised guidelines for country situation analyses incorporating the standards set by the Convention; and the training of Government and UNICEF staff, United Nations agencies and non-governmental organizations to ensure that their programmes had a positive influence on progress towards full implementation.

17. The World Summit for Children likewise signalled a new international commitment to child survival, protection and development and gave hope that there was both the will and the ability to address those issues. It was now imperative for UNICEF to maintain a sense of interest in follow-up to the World Summit. It should investigate what new action had been taken by international organizations other than UNICEF in support of the Summit goals, whether such organizations were being given additional funding and other assistance to meet those goals, and whether bilateral aid programmes had been reordered in support of those goals.

18. The recent achievement of 80 per cent immunization levels world wide was another step forward. The attainment of that goal had saved the lives of millions of children and secured the healthy development of millions more, making it realistic to aim at the eradication of polio and neonatal tetanus in the coming decade. In addition to the development of new potent vaccines, community awareness and participation in cost recovery were important elements in the sustainability of universal child immunization (UCI).

19. As a follow-up to the World Summit, Indonesia had reviewed the targets of several child welfare activities. Its fifth five-year development plan addressed children's issues and its UNICEF country programme was consistent with Summit goals. Given the need for consistency between the government planning process and UNICEF country programmes and overall strategy, Indonesia suggested that UNICEF should include in the State of the World's Children 1992 report a country-by-country breakdown of the numbers of children and mothers who would be saved yearly if the country's commitments were fulfilled. The national programmes of action to be prepared before the end of 1991 in response to the Summit Plan of Action should be incorporated into national development plans and should contain an assessment of past performance, trends and policy-based projections.

20. Turning to the medium-term plan for 1991-1994 contained in document E/ICEF/1991/3, his delegation suggested that the 7 per cent of total income currently earmarked for emergencies from supplementary funding should be increased to 10 per cent if additional supplementary funds became available.

21. Mrs. KANG Ling (China) expressed appreciation for UNICEF's success in the past year in improving the conditions for child survival, development and education and in promoting the integration of women in development. The year 1990 had been an historic year for children: the Declaration and Plan of Action adopted at the World Summit for Children were the two most important documents ever adopted on behalf of children, brightening their prospects and

(Mrs. Kang Ling, China)

filling their advocates with confidence. The year had also seen the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which China was in the process of ratifying, and the realization of the goal of 80 per cent immunization coverage for children in the developing world. That extraordinary accomplishment had saved over 12 million young lives and prevented the crippling of over one and a half million children. It would have a major impact on reducing mortality rates and improving development prospects. China fully endorsed the goals and strategies for children in the 1990s adopted by the Executive Board, and supported UNICEF's efforts to consolidate the gains in immunization coverage by extending it to the remaining 20 per cent of children in the poorest and hardest to reach groups.

22. Many disturbing problems still affected children, however: the mortality rate in the developing world stood at 14 million children each year, while chronic malnutrition affected one child in every three and only 55 per cent of children completed four years of primary education. Of the 900 million illiterate or semi-illiterate adults in the world, two thirds were women. One third to one half of rural families lacked clean water and safe sanitation. Even more disturbing was the fact that the debt burden of developing countries had not been alleviated, thereby preventing them from improving those conditions. China believed that such a situation was no longer tolerable, and it would work for the establishment of a new world political and economic order.

23. 1990 had also been an impressive year for child development in China. After five years of hard work, it had achieved the goal of 85 per cent immunization coverage at provincial levels by 1988 and at county levels by 1990. Over the past 40 years, the Government had made remarkable improvements in child health, nutrition, education and welfare and in maternal and child health care. A 1986 law on compulsory education gave every school-age child the right to education, and over 74.6 per cent of children completed primary education. Seventeen Chinese provinces had issued regulations for the protection of children, and a national law on the protection of minors was under review. In 1990, a National Coordinating Committee for Women and Children had been set up to coordinate the work of 19 government departments, agencies and organizations, the current goal being the formulation of child development plans. China had also made progress in reducing school drop-out rates for girls in nine provinces, although girls still made up 83 per cent of children without schooling. China was also providing family and social education to nearly 100 million people, alongside formal education.

24. Among China's remaining problems, however, were certain areas of maternal and child health care. In a country with such a large population, vast territory, huge geographical differences and uneven economic development, it was an arduous task to achieve the goals set by the World Summit and the World Conference on Education for All, but China would attempt to do so by setting practical and specific objectives.

25. Mr. THOMPSON (Barbados) said that, since ratifying the Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1990, his Government had been trying to ensure its widest possible acceptance among the general public through coordinated efforts with community groups and the media. Preparations were also well advanced on a national plan of action embodying a multisectoral approach to achieving the goals of the World Summit for Children. Recognizing that education and community participation were pivotal to the achievement of those goals, the Barbados Child Care Board had been highlighting the role of parents as major caregivers, and assistance was being provided to parents at the community level by Government agencies and non-governmental organizations. The Child Care Board had also introduced a number of programmes to deal with one major problem, the integration of disabled children into the mainstream. Under the newly established Foster Care Association, a lively foster care programme existed for other children in especially difficult circumstances, and the hope was to move away entirely from institutionalization.

26. Some issues which Barbados felt needed urgent attention were the discriminatory treatment of the mentally ill and the acute need for health and education programmes to curb the spread of HIV/AIDS and protect vulnerable groups, especially young girls and women of child-bearing age. Barbados had established a National Advisory Committee on AIDS, which was working through the media and other channels to encourage changes in attitudes and lifestyles.

27. Barbados gave foremost priority to the girl child and had been addressing such critical aspects of the role and status of women as the education of girls and women and their health and legal status. It was emphasizing programmes to combat the high incidence of teenage pregnancy, and instruction was being provided on the practices of safe motherhood and family planning.

28. Barbados, along with other Caribbean countries, was supporting the goal of universal child immunization (UCI). Polio had been completely eradicated and there was a country-wide measles immunization programme aimed at all children between the ages of 1 and 15 in all schools. Immunization against diphtheria, polio and tetanus was already compulsory, prior to entering school.

29. Barbados was fully committed to ensuring the full participation of women in all spheres of national life, particularly at the decision-making level, while fully recognizing women's multiple roles, particularly as heads of household since some 43 per cent of Barbadian families were headed by women. A National Advisory Council on Women had been set up recently to review the status of women and define a national policy statement. The Council would also examine existing legislation and recommend areas for change, and would take a participatory approach by bringing together resource persons from public and private agencies and meeting with women by sectors. It was the Government's intention to implement the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Summit Declaration and Plan of Action in conjunction with the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. Moreover, the Advisory Council on Women would seek to involve men wherever possible in child survival, protection and development activities, and to

(Mr. Thompson, Barbados)

ensure informed and sensitive reporting on women's and children's issues in the media.

30. The recently concluded strategy meeting organized by the UNICEF Caribbean Area Office had been particularly successful. Barbados was determined to maintain the momentum of the historic World Summit for Children.

31. Ms. Seth (India), Vice-Chairman, took the Chair.

32. Mr. HOSSAIN (Bangladesh) observed that for UNICEF and for the children of the world, the 1990s had seen a wonderful beginning with the World Summit for Children, the entry into force of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the World Conference on Education for All, as well as the dramatic achievements in universal child immunization. UNICEF must translate the promise of those historic events into reality, and Bangladesh would help in every way possible. The lesson of the 1980s was that hunger, poverty, malnutrition and a threatened environment could prove disastrous to children, particularly in the least developed countries, and UNICEF goals for the 1990s must accord priority to the needs of those countries.

33. The welfare of children in the developing nations could not be viewed in isolation from the economic stagnation and hardship in those countries. Sustainable development was a necessity, and its achievement required cooperation between the countries concerned and their development partners, including international organizations and indigenous non-governmental organizations. The World Summit for Children had in its Declaration clearly highlighted the importance of debt-relief initiatives for achieving the goals for children in the 1990s, and UNICEF's call in the early 1980s for "adjustment with a human face" had been a widely appreciated step in that direction. Bangladesh encouraged UNICEF to explore voluntary debt-reduction schemes that might be used to support additional efforts in developing countries to promote child survival, protection and development.

34. The implementation of the World Summit Plan of Action, which was of paramount importance if the pledges made to children were to be fulfilled, would require community, national and international commitment to the cause of children and would have to be combined with the revitalization of economic growth in the developing countries, poverty reduction, human resources development and environmental protection. It was only natural that UNICEF should play an active and constructive role in the follow-up to the Plan of Action. The strategy and social mobilization used to achieve the breakthrough in UCI, and the high-level political support and multisectoral international cooperation generated, should be expanded and directed towards the goal of child survival, protection and development in the 1990s.

35. Budget allocations for staffing were very closely related to the implementation of the goals for the 1990s. Field offices would require strong advisory and support services from headquarters to meet their challenges effectively, but the priority of strengthening field offices must be respected.

(Mr. Hossain, Bangladesh)

36. The close cooperation between his Government and UNICEF had been manifested by the formation of a joint Government-UNICEF advisory group. Bangladesh had committed itself to universal child immunization. Its expanded programme on immunization (EPI) had expanded from eight sub-districts in 1986 to all 460 sub-districts by the end of 1989. Extensive advocacy and social mobilization had raised UCI coverage to more than 60 per cent by 1990.

37. In the education sector, attention must be focused on developing low-cost, community and home-based activities as well as non-formal channels to complement the formal primary school system. Bangladesh had enacted laws providing free and compulsory primary education with effect from 1991. As part of a broad strategy to improve the status and role of women in society, it had decided to recruit only female primary schoolteachers.

38. A small working group would be formed in each relevant ministry in order to formulate a national action plan for implementing the Summit Plan of Action. His Government would join other countries of the region in an annual review of the implementation of the Summit Declaration.

39. Mr. OSATANANDA (Thailand) said that UNICEF's role in stimulating the debate on development policy issues had received wide recognition, as was demonstrated by increased financial contributions to the Fund. His delegation endorsed the Executive Director's recommendation that the medium-term plan contained in document E/ICEF/1991/3 should be approved as a framework for projections for 1991-1994. It also supported the preparation of up to $500 million in programme expenditures from general resources.

40. The progress achieved in universal child immunization was heartening. His delegation also encouraged UNICEF to continue its leadership role in identifying and implementing measures to provide debt relief in order to ease the burden of debt on children.

41. His delegation commended UNICEF efforts to strengthen the role of women in development, including the continued support given to the formulation of the necessary national policies. The survival and development of girl children was a universal problem, found to varying degrees in most regions of the world. Studies similar to the evaluation report on sex differentials in child survival and development in the Middle East and North Africa should be conducted in all regions in order to develop appropriate programmes.

42. He drew attention to the concept of family development, with special emphasis on the role and responsibility of men in the family and analysis of their role in child survival, protection and development and women's development. That topic had received very little attention in most ongoing and new country programmes. The family was a primary social institution which still provided the best and most affordable informal security system for children and other dependants in most developing countries. Unfortunately, modernization and changing social values had considerably weakened the

(Mr. Osatananda, Thailand)

traditional family, with detrimental consequences for women and girl children, both as the providers and the dependants of the family. It was high time that action was taken to promote equal sharing of family responsibilities by male and female members. In Thailand, protection of children's and women's rights and promotion of the family had received high priority in government policy. The National Committee on the Family was carrying out extensive family development programmes and was involved in preparations for observance of the International Year of the Family in 1994.

43. His delegation was in favour of giving continued attention to children in especially difficult circumstances. The UNICEF response to emergency situations such as natural disasters and armed conflict during the past year also deserved high tribute from the international community. His delegation fully supported integrating AIDS activities into ongoing country programmes and continued close cooperation with the WHO Global Programme on AIDS. It was gratifying to learn that UNICEF was now approaching global problems in a more methodical manner and was emphasizing flexible implementation strategies.

44. Mr. CAT (Uruguay) said that the economic crisis of the 1980s and the external debt burden had led to a reversal of economic gains and a massive increase in extreme poverty in his country. Uruguay's demographics made it almost unique in its region. Its low birth rate and population growth, combined with a high life expectancy, had led to a marked aging of its population. In addition, it had experienced a high rate of urbanization and progressive population loss in rural areas. Despite those demographic factors, however, its economy remained similar to that of a developing country. Because Uruguay's indicators for such elements as per capita income, infant mortality, malnutrition and literacy ranked among the best in the region, it had been difficult to gain recognition for the gravity of its social problems. Prolonged economic stagnation had created pockets of chronic poverty with indicators comparable to the worst in Latin America.

45. The growing social deterioration had undermined the effectiveness of traditional social policies which had been aimed at a population consisting primarily of low-income workers and their families. The new poor fell outside that sector, with the result that massive public spending on social programmes was not reaching the groups in greatest need. Public education, for example, had a high rate of coverage, but lacked the necessary effectiveness. The Government was now faced with the task of redirecting social spending towards priority groups and needs. Because it had also undertaken a rigorous structural adjustment and inflation control programme which affected the most vulnerable sectors disproportionately, it had had to develop a strategy designed to help them achieve self-sufficiency.

46. The Government had established an advisory commission on social investment with United Nations assistance, a social investment programme responsible for creating a population data bank to identify beneficiaries. It had also established a social emergency fund whose goals included the

(Mr. Cat, Uruguay)

protection of children in especially difficult circumstances. The Fund also coordinated the activities of non-governmental organizations and the Government in order to prevent duplication of effort and ensure the most effective use of resources.

47. In addition to solving problems, it was necessary to tackle their root causes. His Government evaluated its policies in terms of social effectiveness, not just economics. Its current action in the social sector involved redefining strategies, restructuring social systems, and redirecting social spending. Such an ambitious undertaking could not succeed without the financial and technical cooperation of the international community.

48. Uruguay had joined Argentina, Brazil and Paraguay in forming the Southern Common Market (MERCOSUR), which would substantially expand its markets but also require a major competitive effort. His country was ready for the challenge, but would require international cooperation during the transition period. It had also reached an agreement with its international creditors on the restructuring of its external debt which would permit a debt capitalization policy and, in turn, attract new investment.

49. His delegation believed that UNICEF should intensify its efforts to help children in those parts of the world where the need was greatest. It was not in a position to judge whether the proposed staff increases at headquarters or in the field were really appropriate, but believed that any increase in activities as a result of new resources would have to be handled efficiently and effectively.

50. Mr. KARUKUBIRO-KAMUNANWIRE (Uganda) said that his delegation hoped there would be sufficient political will to ensure the implementation of the goals of the World Summit, which called for intensified efforts at all levels and a serious evaluation exercise.

51. The Gulf war had not only caused tremendous immediate suffering to millions of children, but had had a serious impact on the ability of oil-importing developing countries to improve their situation.

52. Though a priority area, Africa had seen little improvement in its circumstances during 1990. Despite encouraging signs, there had been little change in the situation of children living under apartheid. Civil strife had caused great suffering for women and children and had also created fresh waves of refugees, placing a great strain on the socio-economic infrastructure of neighbouring countries. Those countries must be commended for continuing to welcome refugees, despite the burden on their meagre resources. The debt burden and the social impact of stringent structural adjustment measures had a negative effect on the survival and welfare of children. His delegation hoped that the idea of debt relief for children would be translated into specific programmes.

(Mr. Karukubiro-Kamunanwire, Uganda)

53. On the bright side, Africa had demonstrated great commitment to the goals of ensuring child survival and enhancing child welfare. The African Charter on the Rights of the Child had been adopted as a complement to the international Convention. On the whole, tremendous advances had been made in child immunization, and some progress had been made in the implementation of the Bamako Initiative.

54. Regarding Uganda's country programme, while there had been some positive efforts, his delegation was concerned about certain programmes whose outcome was uncertain. Those included a district health management project and a women and community mobilization project, as well as the Health Financing Initiative. The Government attached high priority to those projects and had included them in its 1991-1992 national budget.

55. The AIDS pandemic posed a real threat to Uganda's population, particularly women and children. Unless urgent measures were taken, it would have an adverse impact on all the activities contemplated in the country programme. His Government's policy concerning AIDS had emphasized public education and awareness. However, combating the spread of AIDS would require additional financial resources which had not been provided for in the country programme budget.

56. The three major project reviews carried out in 1990 had demonstrated his Government's efforts to provide support for the country programme. Nevertheless, the inadequate level of funding remained the greatest factor in the failure to implement projects. He urged donor countries and other potential contributors to extend tangible support in order to enable his Government to achieve the objectives outlined in the country programme.

57. With regard to the revised budget estimates for the biennium 1990-1991 and budget estimates for the biennium 1992-1993, he felt that proposals to ensure adequate resources for unfunded or under-funded programmes were conspicuously absent. In the case of Uganda, it had been suggested that resources should be redirected from some programmes that were just as important as others. He did not view that as a solution. His delegation would appreciate further clarification of the revised budget estimates and proposed programme budget, and looked forward in that regard to the discussions in the Committee on Administration and Finance.

58. His delegation stressed the importance of programme delivery, particularly in developing countries, and the need for UNICEF to give priority to programme implementation. He welcomed the Executive Director's proposals to strengthen country offices in developing countries. Efforts should also be made to build up the middle categories in field offices, because of their critical role in project design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. That would enhance programme delivery, while correcting the imbalance in representation on the UNICEF staff which had hitherto existed between developing and developed countries.

(Mr. Karukubiro-Kamunanwire, Uganda)

59. He also underscored the importance of endogenous capacity-building as an integral part of UNICEF programmes and activities. Experience had shown that many projects were not self-sustaining once UNICEF support was withdrawn, because local project officers did not have the necessary expertise to run them. There was a need to make greater use of local experts and consultants. In that connection, he welcomed the proposal to base the national capacity-building programme in Africa.

60. Every effort should be made to ensure that training, information exchange and the enhancement of management, monitoring and evaluation skills were part of project implementation. UNICEF programmes should encourage the development of local inputs, which would enable countries to save their foreign exchange. Uganda's experience with the iodine deficiency disorders (IDD) programme revealed the need for greater coordination among United Nations agencies at the field level in order to ensure the optimum use of scarce resources.

61. Mr. SULEIMAN (Oman) said that, while the full impact of the Gulf war had yet to be assessed, the loss of remittances from relatives working abroad and their return to face unemployment at home would certainly aggravate the poverty situation of many women and families in the region. Accordingly, UNICEF support to the region should be examined in the light of changing circumstances.

62. Oman fully endorsed the recommendations of the World Summit for Children, which had brought the problems of children to the forefront. He supported the goal of reducing malnutrition by 50 per cent and the integrated approach taken to that issue by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the World Health Organization (WHO) and UNICEF. Another goal which also deserved high priority was improving hygiene and sanitation. That was an area in which, with proper guidance, individuals could do a great deal to enhance their health and well-being. His country felt that the time was ripe for concerted action and that hygiene and sanitation should be given as much attention in the 1990s as immunization and oral rehydration therapy had received in the 1980s.

63. With regard to the development of improved vaccines, Oman had achieved more than 90 per cent immunization coverage and yet, in 1988, a significant paralytic poliomyelitis outbreak had occurred. With such high coverage, natural immunity was lost, and individuals who were not immunized in time became a high risk group. As a result, it might not be possible to eradicate the disease in one country without similar efforts in the neighbouring countries of the region. It was therefore of paramount importance that UNICEF support regional cooperation in the effort to eradicate polio. Another question which must be addressed was whether high immunization coverage with oral polio vaccine alone could stamp out the disease, especially in countries with tropical climates. In order to shed light on that issue, a controlled vaccine efficacy study had been initiated in Oman in cooperation with WHO.

(Mr. Suleiman, Oman)

64. In August 1990, Oman had added hepatitis-B vaccination to its expanded programme on immunization (EPI). However, the cost of the vaccine had increased recently. He believed that if UNICEF could assist countries in the first few years of integrating the vaccine into their EPI, the increased demand would bring the cost down.

65. In the developing world, accidents were an increasing cause of morbidity and mortality, as well as disability among children. The very lives which were saved and nurtured by UNICEF programmes were often subsequently lost or blighted by accidents and injuries. Existing educational, rehabilitation and care facilities for the handicapped were hopelessly inadequate. Expanding those facilities required a change in attitudes, which could be brought about by nationwide community-based efforts. UNICEF had an important role to play in helping countries to promote greater awareness of the needs of the disabled for a range of normal life activities.

66. Ms. Palme (Sweden), Chairman, resumed the Chair.

67. Mrs. MUÑOZ de GAVIRIA (Observer for Colombia) said that, although 1990 had been an historic year for children, the first few months of 1991 had been marked by the Gulf war, and children had been the first to suffer its tragic consequences. Fortunately, the United Nations, primarily UNICEF, and Governments and non-governmental organizations were carrying out humanitarian relief efforts to alleviate the situation.

68. Her Government had defined a new model of development centred on the human person and based on the understanding that without economic development there could be no social development, and vice versa. Priority was being given to strategies to improve conditions for the 48 per cent of the population who lived in poverty, especially children, young people and women.

69. An increasing number of measures were being taken on behalf of children in Colombia. The Convention on the Rights of the Child had become part of Colombian law. The National Constituent Assembly, which was drafting the new Constitution, had agreed to include a chapter specifically guaranteeing the rights of the child and the family and regulating the obligations of parents and society. At the end of May 1991, the Colombian Council on Economic and Social Policy would submit to the President a plan of action for children, outlining specific strategies for meeting the needs of children and young people.

70. Although Colombia had succeeded in greatly expanding primary education, only 7 per cent of children aged under 7 were able to receive preschool education and only 40 per cent of those between the ages of 12 and 17 had access to secondary education. The educational expansion plan for 1990-1994 aimed to enrol a further 630,000 children aged six to seven in preschool education or kindergarten and to create 600,000 new places in secondary education.

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71. In 1990, her country had managed to immunize 80 per cent of children aged under 1 against several communicable diseases. In May and July 1991, 3.5 million children under 5 years of age and 650,000 pregnant women or women of child-bearing age would be immunized against tetanus. Pregnant women would be immunized in the context of prenatal programmes designed to extend maternal and child health care to the earliest stages of pregnancy.

72. Colombia had made great strides in expanding oral rehydration therapy. That programme, combined with other efforts in the areas of sanitation, nutrition and health infrastructures, constituted a strategy for cholera prevention and control. She supported the draft resolution on that subject proposed by Peru.

73. With regard to food and nutrition, expanded food programmes and subsidies would benefit approximately 2.9 million children and 350,000 mothers. To complement those efforts, drinking water supply and monitoring programmes were being carried out.

74. Colombia was aware of the problem of children in especially difficult circumstances and was implementing rehabilitation programmes for young people who were at risk of becoming delinquent or were in situations of social risk, such as street children, working children or victims of child abuse.

75. With regard to the advancement of women, her Government was promoting policies and programmes in the areas of income generation and employment, legal protection and assistance, education and training, and health and organization. Special emphasis was placed on women heads of household, teenage girls and pregnant women.

76. Lastly, she wished to underscore the comments made by the President of Colombia at the World Summit concerning her country's struggle against drugs. Colombians of all social sectors had paid an extremely high price for that struggle. The country had committed resources beyond its means to the detriment of its development and social investment programmes. For that reason, she felt justified in asking for support from multilateral and bilateral cooperation agencies.

The meeting rose at 6 p.m.